

THE TRIBUNE

Comment & Opinions

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EDITORIAL

RIDE to arrive alive

If December is party time, it's also RIDE time. If these few paragraphs serve as a reminder that you might get pulled over, fined or your licence suspended, one or more lives might be saved.

Public awareness that police forces participate in the Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere campaign is a key factor in preventing deaths during this holiday season.

The death toll is staggering. In this the happiest time of year, it's a grim reminder that last year in the five-week holiday period, the Ontario Provincial Police alone investigated 46 fatal collisions in which 56 people were killed. York and Durham officers also witnessed too many accidents which stole parents from their children and husbands from their families.

This year's RIDE campaign is a prime example of the way volunteer organizations, police forces and governments can work together to keep drunk drivers off the road.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) is again this year distributing its familiar red ribbons to motorists to promote sober driving.

The OPP and both the York Region and Durham Region police forces will send extra officers out on our streets for spot checks to ensure only sober drivers are on the roads.

And the province has given a \$30,000 grant to York Regional Police and \$20,000 to Durham Police to cover the extra overtime costs associated with RIDE spot checks.

All these organizations want to remind you to have a designated driver if you're going to drink; and whether partying or not, slow down and ensure you arrive alive.



Outgoing council gave us bumpy ride

Have we left the best 'til last?
Last night, the new Whitchurch-Stouffville Council was sworn in. It begged this double-barrelled question: Will it be the best council ever and will it be the last?

My crystal ball shows us waving bye-bye to the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville in the not-too-distant future. The provincial overhaul of the Greater Toronto Area will not bypass this area. Change will hit here. The hit will be significant.

We are, indeed, entering a critical time for this community. If ever we needed good local government, it's now. Since we'll have to cut a deal, it



Off the Record

Joan Ransberry

would be nice if we had a deal maker at the table.

My crystal ball also shows that the new council has the potential to listen, to be free with information, to make decisions that stick, to be willing and able to work as a team and will respect each other, especially when facing their differences.

The last local council was, at times, dysfunctional. I acknowledge that the old council kept a lid on taxes for three consecutive years and, in doing so, the delivery of services didn't suffer.

Yes, the kids got a second ice pad and Musselman's Lake and Balantrae, facing a health risk from contaminated wells, scored an \$8-million communal water system. And, yes, the north is about to get a fire hall.

I'm quite aware that much was done. Still, from where I view the world, the end doesn't justify the means. Maybe the past council got

where it was going, but oh what a bumpy ride.

The old council was a public relations disaster. Instead of using energy, time and brain power to make this a better community, some members of council and town staff bickered, snarled and barked at each other. I often wondered if council chambers was a House of Commons training camp.

And the tail wagged the dog in this town. It appeared as if staff and not council was running the show. While the bureaucrats would answer questions at public meetings, they resented being asked.

As for me, I exercised the arrive late-leave early survival technique. The best thing I can say about the old council is: I'm glad it's over.

Let's hope the new council supports the principles of democracy and wants to be open.

If ever a town needed a public relations boost, it's Whitchurch-Stouffville. This town needs to smile more and frown less.

I hope council members and town staff will feel free to talk to the media without paying a penalty or fearing a reprimand. Remember: Muzzles are for dogs, not people. And bullies shouldn't be welcomed or tolerated.

My media motto is: Tell all, laws permitting. When it comes to the media and government, when each takes the time to learn the role of the other, they get along fine.

Experience has taught me that a successful council always has a good relationship with the media.

And finally, the new council should take a page out of the Gambler's bible and "learn when to hold them; learn when to fold them; learn when to walk away and learn when to run."

Now I demand more of my heroes

At the tender age of 16, I would have given my entire year's allowance to meet the Rolling Stones.

As a sensible, sober, middle-aged adult, I had considered myself beyond such juvenile excesses until last Wednesday, when a friend called to tell me Stephen Fry was reading in Toronto the following evening.

"Fantastic!" I shrieked.
Mr. Wallethead, convinced I was having some sort of seizure, rushed in to perform CPR or the Heimlich Manoeuvre, or perhaps make a nice cup of tea to circumvent the crisis.

"What on earth's the matter?" he asked. "Stephen Fry is reading at Indigo," I explained. "That's nice," he said, mildly. "Are you going?"

If Stephen Fry were appearing in Thunder Bay, I assured my significant other, I'd be there.

Once I had calmed down sufficiently to drink the proffered Tetleys, I called my son and shared the joyful tidings. He was equally delighted.



Kate's Corner

Kate Gilderdale

The man who has starred in Jeeves and Wooster, Blackadder, Peter's Friends and — coming to a theatre near you sometime next year — Oscar, offered a magical evening of self-deprecating wit and biting insight, along with a facility for language few writers could match.

Fry's courtesy and charm endeared him to everyone in the audience, which ranged from members of my son's generation to retirees.

On our way home, I made a mental inventory of my heroes over the years, beginning with Cliff Richard — I was only 12 at the time — and encompassing a motley crew of brilliant, bow-legged, nasal troubadours, among them two of a legion of

faux Elvises who rose briefly to fame in Britain around 1960.

When I reached a sophisticated 16, I was a staunch Beatles fan, rousing myself at 4 o'clock one chilly morning to go to Heathrow Airport and welcome them home from America, along with 9,999 of my peers. All I saw were four little dots on the tarmac, but the point of the exercise was to have been there at all. Now, I would not cross the street to attend a Beatles' reunion, should one be organized. And my enjoyment of their music has been tempered by the endless regurgitation of classic hits on retro radio everywhere.

As I get older and crabrier, I demand different attributes from my heroes. The ability to swivel hips or snarl into a camera has somehow lost its allure.

The reason writers have replaced writhers in my heart is neatly reflected in the words of Arnold Bennett: "Literature exists so that where one man has lived finely, ten thousand may afterwards live finely."

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